

June 2023

Dear Valued members

Thieves targeting automotive workshops – Remain vigilant at all times

It has come to our attention that criminals are becoming more brazen and starting to target some of our workshops. Just last week one of the workshops in Cape Town that had been robbed at gun point a month ago, this time spotted a taxi stopping just in front of their shop and two of the passengers brazenly opened their window and started recording what was happening at the workshop.

This clearly raises an alarm bell for any workshop owner as there have been a number of incidents of cars going missing at motor industry related businesses by stealing keys off desks and from keyboards.

Our workshops could be next.

We spoke to Wahl Bartmann, CEO of Fidelity Services Group, who confirmed this type of modus operandi is not uncommon. The suspects first scope the premises and then once they can see how the business is managed will often strike if any weak areas are identified. Alternatively, he has seen cases of criminals entering a business posing as a customer or as a delivery supplier and then proceeding to hold staff at gunpoint.

Fidelity says businesses are often most vulnerable during opening and closing times. If suspects know there is something worthwhile to take, a small window of opportunity when a staff member is vulnerable, is all criminals need. To avoid being targeted, business owners need to prioritise safety and get security in place which is linked to an armed response service. Staff also need to be trained to be aware of any activity which is atypical and should immediately report this to a supervisor.

Bartmann says there are the top six priorities to consider to keep your business safe:

- **Control access:** It is very important that businesses, as far as possible, ensure that there is some form of controlled access. “A locked security gate can provide you with a vital few minutes to evaluate a situation before the suspects are actually in the premises. If you feel something is not right, don’t open the gate” he says.
- **Make sure all staff know the safety drills:** Ensure staff are adequately briefed on security measures and remain vigilant about making a conscious effort to keep their workplace safe. Staff should carry panic buttons at all times and not hesitate to use them if they see something or someone suspicious.
- **Lock up in pairs:** Ideally two people should be tasked with locking up the business and ensuring the premises are secure at the end of the day.
- **Do not keep large amounts of cash onsite:** It is not advisable to withdraw large amounts of cash from the bank or keep large amounts of cash onsite. Ensure you have a regular collection of your cash so your loss, in case of an incident, is minimal.
- **Check your perimeter security:** Now is also the opportune moment to check your perimeter security and have any vulnerable areas reinforced. Start with your fence, wall and gate. Check that there are no overhanging trees or bushes that could be used to climb into the property. Make sure your gate is secured so it can’t be lifted off the hinges or put into manual overdrive easily. We’d also highly recommend investing in beams that cover the outer perimeter. Beams provide an instant alert should intruders get through the perimeter security.
- **Test your alarm system regularly:** Just like residential properties, businesses should also test their alarm systems are in working order before the festive season hits. “If you suspect there is a fault, arrange for a technician to visit the site sooner rather than later,” he says. If you are closing up your business over the December break, ensure that the property is secured and alarms are set.

“Make sure that the contact person on your business security profile is available should there be an alarm activation,” he says.

As the economy tightens even further, criminals will become even more brazen, so we encourage all members to remain vigilant at all times.

Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Pieter Niemand', written in a cursive style.

Pieter Niemand
MIWA National Director